Florida, Naturally

Florida Environmental Literacy Plan

Photos provided by The Florida Aquarium, Inc.
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Introduction

Environmental literacy is the awareness and knowledge of interrelationships among natural systems; the skills to investigate and make informed decisions; and the understanding of how to apply this information.
Coyle, K. 2005

Environmentally literate Floridians have the knowledge, skills, and motivation to act responsibility and implement positive actions for achieving and maintaining a sustainable balance between human and environmental systems. Ensuring every person in Florida receives a balanced, academically centered environmental education is central to achieving environmental literacy and securing healthy, prosperous lives.

What is an Environmental Literacy Plan?
An Environmental Literacy Plan or ELP is a plan to teach about how ecosystems and human systems are interdependent and to increase environmental literacy for everyone in a state.

The current trend in creating each state’s environmental literacy plan emerged from the No Child Left Inside initiatives. The gains for environmental education came as a result of years-long work by champions of the bipartisan No Child Left Inside (NCLI) Act, which sought to secure federal dollars to support states’ efforts to implement environmental literacy plans in K-12 public schools. In anticipation of this new emphasis on environmental education, the No Child Left Inside Coalition worked with states since 2008 to develop environmental literacy plans, identifying the necessary steps to ensure students are environmentally literate when they graduate from high school.
On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law, reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (formerly, No Child Left Behind). Now, with the passage of ESSA, environmental education, for the first time, has been singled out in an Elementary and Secondary Act Authorization bill, a victory for environmental education advocates who fought hard to make this a reality.

Congress and the White House stepped up incentives (authorizing more grant funding) to encourage states and local state governments to provide students with a well-rounded education, including environmental education, history, civics, and STEM, among others.

The states that have developed Environmental Literacy Plans such as the FELP will be able to use the plans to help set the stage to give environmental education a leg up, as states and localities implement the law.

How is Environmental Literacy Connected to Environmental Education?

Environmental education is the framework on which environmental literacy is built. Through EE, individuals, communities, and organizations learn about the environment, develop skills to investigate and analyze environmental problems, and make wise, informed decisions about how to care for the environment.

_Environmental education (EE) provides the skills necessary for people of all ages to make intelligent, informed decisions about the environment and how they can take care of it—Most importantly, it can help people make informed decisions about the environment that lead to lifelong stewardship and a more sustainable society._

_NAAEE: About EE and Why It Matters_
Why Should Florida Have an Environmental Literacy Plan?

An ELP presents an occasion to increase opportunities to learn about environmental issues to make informed decisions about complex environmental issues affecting the economy, public health and safety, and shared natural resources, such as the water, air and land on which life depends. Ideally, an ELP:

- Should inspire and guide more focused campaigns for change
- Will help us meet environmental and social challenges.
- Includes notes on the relationship between a plan and specific campaigns
- Will balance aspirational goals with more readily achievable goals
- Fosters collaboration between educators with an aim to leverage their expertise and resources
- Benefits Florida’s environment and economy by preparing young people to become citizens with the knowledge and skills to make responsible decisions that protect ecosystems and support sustainability. (MAINE)
- Highlight optimism, opportunity, and future potential

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**Thoughts from Maine’s ELP:**

As economic and environmental challenges arise, so do opportunities. Maine’s unique combination of human and natural resources positions Maine to be at the forefront of many new technologies and groundbreaking environmental policies. By helping Maine’s young people become environmentally literate, the State is cultivating innovation, prosperity, and an informed citizenry with the knowledge and skills to address future challenges."
The Role of the League of Environmental Educators in Florida (LEEF) in the Development of the ELP

The mission of the League of Environmental Educators in Florida (LEEF) is to advance environmental literacy and promote stewardship through excellence in environmental education. Florida's environmental literacy plan was originally developed by LEEF and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Office of Environmental Education and Sustainable Initiatives in partnership with the Florida Department of Education Office of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, and Florida Department of Education Office of Healthy Schools, with additional input from a wide range stakeholders in the education and environmental communities. LEEF is the official sponsor of the Florida Environmental Literacy Plan.

How to Use this Environmental Literacy Plan

Everyone can contribute to increasing environmental literacy in Florida. The Florida Environmental Literacy Plan is divided into three contexts: Home, Learning, and Work. The latter two each contain their own important categories so you can quickly find the information that is most relevant to you. Each section will include a brief introduction to how environmental literacy relates, as well as some key goals. The goals will include concrete, actionable suggestions for implementation. Most sections will also include resources to pursue for more ideas and specifics.

Naturally, there is considerable overlap in how environmental literacy can be improved in a state as large as Florida; it is connected to our lives in many ways. In addition to examining the context most relevant to you, be sure to browse other sections that may be of interest. LEEF developed this environmental literacy guide as a reference material for individuals, businesses, and communities and as a handbook for setting priorities and making decisions regarding environmental literacy and sustainability. Now, LEEF, the state’s non-profit professional organization for environmental education, will develop its own ELP that will put many aspects of the guide into effect by supporting and training
educators; serving as a resource for governmental agencies, businesses, and community groups; advocating for environmental education, etc.

Individuals and groups are encouraged to create their own ELP that is specific to their personal beliefs and values. It is recommended that goals and action items, time bound when possible, will lead towards an increased environmental literacy. The plans may be flexible and able to be amended as circumstances require.

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**Outcomes of Successful Implementation**

All people in Florida use sustainable practices at home, work, learning, and play.

All people in Florida have access to clean and sustainable natural resources.

All people in Florida have access to quality outdoor experiences.

All people in Florida have opportunities to learn about the natural world and their place in or connections to it.

*Adapted from Wisconsin’s Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities*
Environmental Literacy in Action

Climbing the Environmental Literacy Ladder

Capacity for personal and collective action and civic participation

↑

Problem solving and critical thinking skills

↑

Attitudes of appreciation and concern for the environment

↑

Knowledge and understanding of human and natural systems and processes

↑

General awareness of the relationship between the environment and human life

© 2007 Campaign for Environmental Literacy
By practicing sustainable behaviors, spending time outdoors, and acting locally on behalf of the environment, we create environmentally literate households. Below are suggestions on steps you can take at home.

Sustainable Behaviors

Goal 1: Reduce your negative impact on environmental quality.
- Consider carpooling, bicycling, or walking instead of driving
- Purchase eco-friendly and energy efficient products
- Investigate alternative energy choices used by household (solar, wind, etc.)
- Be aware of where and how the food is produced and the environmental consequences associated with its production
- Reduce food waste and packaging
- Install eco-friendly landscaping
- Reduce water usage
- Refuse, reduce, reuse, and recycle

Time Outdoors

Goal 2: Incorporate time outside into your family’s routine.
- Visit local, regional, and statewide nature centers, preserves, forests, and parks
- Learn about Florida’s unique ecosystems
- Play with your children outdoors and encourage independent exploration
- When choosing outdoor activities, select providers that actively reduce their environmental impact
- Select the appropriate place to play to avoid damaging natural resources
- Integrate environmental education when participating in leisure activities
- Promote healthy lifestyles through frequent outdoor recreation activities

Think Globally, Act Locally

Goal 3: Model civic engagement and responsibility regarding environmental issues.
- increase knowledge of local, regional, state, and global environmental issues
• increase knowledge of the origin of water resources and issues facing its quantity and quality
• Join reputable environmental groups, online environmental communities, etc.
• Ask questions of local community leaders and organizations
• Seek out multiple viewpoints to better understand the issue
• Stay abreast of decisions and outcomes related to environmental issues
• Attend local town hall meetings related to environmental issues
• Familiarize oneself with local elected leaders’ positions on environmental issues and use that knowledge to inform voting
• Participate in service learning and citizen science projects as a family
Learning

The Florida State Standards and the Next Generation State Standards do include some environmental literacy concepts that are infused throughout the PK-12 curriculum, mainly as part of science and social studies standards. However, to be effective, education for environmental literacy needs to be integrated throughout the PreK-16 curriculum in Florida’s classrooms and include connected, sustained opportunities for students to participate in direct outdoor learning experiences and classroom activities that increase awareness of environmental topics and core content knowledge. Because the traditional curriculum is often subject specific, EE often falls through the cracks in our educational system, leaving a gap in the essential knowledge that students need in a well-rounded curriculum.

EE is a multi-disciplinary field integrating disciplines such as biology, chemistry, physics, ecology, earth science, atmospheric science, mathematics, history, and geography. It helps students connect and apply learning from all content areas such as math, science, language arts, social studies, physical education, practical living, and arts and the humanities.

STEM includes science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. EE is often minimally included in STEM activities. Consider as an example, though, the field of environmental engineering. In recent years, it has broken away from civil engineering to become a much more important field on its own to encompass water, wastewater, soil pollution, air pollution, risk assessment, ecosystems, human health, toxicology, sustainable development, and much more. If we have

“We often forget that all education is environmental education – by what we include or exclude, we teach the young that they are part of or apart from the natural world.”

Dr. David Orr
Environmental Educator, Author, and Professor
Oberlin College
students pursuing this field, clearly their education about the environment must be started at an early school grade and continued through the college years.

The FELP Team recognizes that support for environmental literacy within educational standards happens on a variety of levels: the classroom, the school, the school district and at the state level. As such, recommendations for supporting student environmental literacy at each of those levels are provided in this plan. Professional development opportunities for teachers are also included at each level. Each strategy outlined below supports one or more of the three overall objectives of the plan.

Early Childhood

Environmental literacy begins with life experiences during the very earliest years of life. The North American Association of Environmental Education defines early childhood environmental education as “a holistic concept that encompasses knowledge of the natural world as well as emotions, dispositions, and skills,” (NAAEE, 2010, 3). ECEE stimulates high levels of physical activity and increases motor skills, fitness, and balance. Cognitively, it stimulates creativity, language
building, concentration and self-control. Social benefits include less anxiety, a higher self-worth, and formation of positive environmental attitudes. In early childhood, it is important to concentrate on building a foundation that will allow for positive examination of issues and appropriate action later in life. Outdoor experiences for young children should focus primarily on exploring and enjoying the natural world under the guidance.

Goal 1: Provide developmentally appropriate experiences for young children to connect with nature.
- Focus on “experiencing” versus “teaching”. The adult is a facilitator rather than a teacher.
- Experiences should incorporate getting feet wet, climbing rocks, building with sticks, exploring woodlands, following insects, and so forth. The emphasis is on positive and frequent interactions with nature.
- Provide the young child with a space to develop a sense of wonder and the joy of discovery.
- Place an emphasis on the development of individual feelings, beliefs, and inner unity with nature. Environmental literacy begins with an emotional attachment to the natural world and an understanding of the link between the child and nature.
- Naturalize outdoor environments in early childhood centers by adding features such as diverse vegetation, a shallow water feature, vegetable and wildlife gardens, and versatile loose parts of natural objects for children to manipulate.
- Take note of the Call to Action, RE-CONNECTING THE WORLD’S CHILDREN, for research-based information about the benefits derived from making sure nature learning becomes a part of each child’s life. (See resource list)

Goal 2: Provide early childhood educators with opportunities for professional development related to nature education.
- Provide early childhood educators with information about nature education resources as part of the Early Childhood Teacher Certification in Florida.
- Encourage early childhood educators to participate in annual professional development opportunities related to nature education.
- Create partnerships and active communication between early childhood educators and a variety of interested individuals and organizations to
support networking, resource sharing, and advertising of professional development opportunities.

PreK-12

Goal 1: Ensure that environmental literacy is integrated into and becomes an integral part of the PK-12 standard curriculum.

- Identify specific content standards, content areas, and courses or subjects where instruction could take place to use as a basis for incorporating environmental literacy into school practices.
- Identify model curriculum and instructional units in all content areas to guide teachers in the effective implementation of identified standards.
- Include environmentally oriented careers in career development activities to assist in graduating college and career ready students that will have the critical tools to become the 21st century workforce to meet our increasingly complex environmental issues and problems.
- Provide programs for professional development of K-12 educators and administrators to improve their environmental content knowledge, skill in teaching about environmental issues, including the use of interdisciplinary, field-based, and research-based pedagogical skills while ensuring utilization of this information.
- Engage underserved communities through an inclusive process so that all stakeholders are beneficiaries of environmental education in schools.
- Ensure consistency, accuracy, and excellence in environmental content knowledge.
- Design all programs to ensure access for special needs students.
- Include instructional opportunities for outdoor learning, service learning, career pathways, and STEM programs.
- Ensure the operation of school buildings is conducted in an environmentally sensitive manner. This could include, for example, restoring natural habitats on school grounds or practicing increased energy conservation. Many city, county, or state environmental management agencies are potential partners to develop strategies for new school construction and school renovation projects to meet “green building” design requirements.
Higher Education
Environmental literacy needs to be incorporated into all aspects of higher education, such as education for students, faculty and staff, and also in the functioning of the institutions.

Goal 1: Identify and promote interdisciplinary majors/certificates that address environmental literacy in students

Goal 2: Identify and promote campus organizations that work towards developing environmental literacy in students and in the community

Goal 3: Facilitate professional development for faculty to incorporate aspects of environmental literacy into courses across the institution, not just science courses/departments

Goal 4: Coordinate sustainability initiatives campus wide that include education components to communicate and encourage environmentally responsible behaviors and operations of campus buildings and facilities, for example, campaigns across campus that not only encourage things like alternative transportation efforts, but also green buildings and operations such as water use, energy use, recycling, etc.
  • carpooling and alternative transportation to campus
  • reduce waste programs on campus including recycling
  • efficiency of buildings, water and energy
  • Green Team or some kind of monitoring organization on campus to promote sustainability
  • low waste at events such as sporting events
  • encourage green building such as committing to only building LEED certified facilities
  • retrofit old buildings to be more efficient

Administrators
Goal 1: Facilitate the robust implementation, funding, and evaluation of environmental literacy at the local and state levels. (Vicki)
  • Endorse the FELP and write a state and/or district environmental literacy implementation plan.
• Assign personnel to coordinate environmental literacy programs at the state/district level.
• Facilitate the implementation, integration, and evaluation of environmental education in existing school curricula.
• Offer professional development programs with associated inservice credits for educators to enhance effective implementation of EE programs/activities.
• Identify traditional and non-traditional opportunities and partnerships, both during and beyond the school day, to integrate environmental education into the school setting.
• Seek and receive support to fund state and regional environmental education initiatives to allow broad implementation across all grade levels and school settings.
• Monitor and report on environmental literacy in Florida public schools.
• Make recommendations and seek changes through regulations, legislation, and other means to promote environmental literacy in Florida as a way to provide sustainability of the EE initiatives that have been included in the school curricula.

Students
Goal 1: Strive to achieve environmental literacy by acquiring the tools needed as a responsible citizen to make decisions about environmentally important topics

• Improve academic achievement on standardized tests and other measures of academic progress by stimulating cognitive development as well as to improve motivation, behavior, and attendance.
• Contribute to the whole child development by participating in activities that require teamwork, problem solving, increased attention span, attention to details, and higher-order thinking skills.
• Develop workforce readiness by practicing college and career ready workplace skills and behaviors such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration; and acquiring environmentally related skills that are a 21st century workforce priority.
• Foster environmental sustainability by acquiring basic tools to find solutions and make informed choices in their own lives to achieve and maintain a viable balance between man and the environment.
Nonformal and Informal Educators

According to NAAEE Nonformal Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence the above topics are defined as:

**Nonformal Education:** *Education about the environment that takes place at nonformal settings such as parks, zoos, nature centers, community centers, youth camps etc., rather than in a classroom or school. Any organized educational activity about the environment that takes place outside the formal education system.* *(Frequently used interchangeably with the term informal education)*

**Informal Education:** *Any unstructured environmental education activity outside the formal system where people learn from exhibits, mass media, and everyday living experiences. Also referred to as free choice environmental education; frequently used interchangeably with the term nonformal education)*

These types of environmental education may include, but are not limited to: teacher professional development, community-based service organization programs, youth group merit badge requirements, summer camp themes, and elder hostel seminar objectives.

**Goal 1:** The Goal of nonformal and informal education is not meant to replace the instruction provided in school classrooms, but work in conjunction with it, enriching it and helping students make real-world connections to their community.

- Teach awareness, understanding and appreciation of natural resources.
- Allow program participants to demonstrate learning through site specific stewardship tasks and projects that they can carry over into their own everyday lives.
- Advance environmental and scientific literacy through an interdisciplinary approach to learning

**Goal 2:** Improve understanding of ecological systems and conservation efforts

- Establish partnerships with like missioned agencies and organizations to support environmental education both on and off site.
- Support local, state and national educational standards.
- Help participants experience wildlife, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources.
Goal 3: Create stewards of our lands, help develop skills, motivate and increase commitment and support in conservation efforts at not only a local level but a global scale.

- Instill a sense of stewardship and an understanding of our conservation history
- Use experiential learning to connect children to nature.
- Promote self-guided learning and exploration, rather than highly structured activities.
- Provide opportunities to form an emotional attachment to nature,

The overarching goal of environmental education is an environmentally literate citizenry. Education for environmental literacy and sustainability in prekindergarten through twelfth grade (PK-12) schools provides a foundation where young people acquire the critical thinking and problem solving skills they will need to be successful in this changing world.

Wisconsin ELP
Policy Makers
All the commitment in all the categories of this document is not enough without the support of the administrators who make the laws, govern their constituents—whether they be local, state or federal—and provide budgetary funding.

Policy-makers include:
**Local, State and Federal Government** (Governor, State Representatives, Mayors, Municipal Leaders, State Divisions and Departments, Advocacy Groups, Policy Officials, etc.)

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**Benefits of a Governmental Plan**
- Provides a common vision and set of goals to work toward
- Guides decision-making, policy making, and priority setting.
- Serves as justification for and purpose behind creating or continuing programs, tools, and resources.
- Sets priorities for development and delivery of educational programs, business plans, and community efforts.
- Supplies a rationale and guidance for funding and research efforts.

Adapted from Wisconsin’s Plan for Environmentally Literate and Sustainable Communities

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Goal 1: Specifically endorse the inclusion of environmental literacy (EL) in education.
• Provide policy support, guidelines, and/or recommendations at all levels of administration.
• Promote outreach to show public endorsement of EL via various media-print, TV, internet.

Goal 2: Provide funding opportunities to organizations involved in environmental literacy.
• Develop a budget to provide for outreach, funding and grants.
• Create a mechanism to provide grants to organizations and schools.

Goal 3: Use LEEF as a resource for policy makers.
• Review LEEF’s accurate and up-to-date information for help in interpreting policies.

Business and Community Groups and Organizations
Businesses may include sole proprietors, small and large businesses, business associations, and networks while community groups and organizations may include non-government organizations, civic organizations, youth groups, faith-based groups, cultural groups, general public.

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Developing a greater sense of the importance and impact of environmental literacy in the workplace can not only shift attitudes and actions, but may also increase productivity, efficiency and profitability.

Delaware and Wisconsin ELPs

Support for guidance in environmental literacy can be useful and relevant. It must consider the mission of the organization or business; provide information that relates to the success of the business; and take into account the needs and goals of future generations of employers and employees. Increasing environmental
literacy in the workplace will also positively affect the health, safety, and welfare of employees and employers.

Note: LEEF can partner with businesses to provide assistance on how best to improve their conservation work (outreach/educational resources).

The Environmental Literacy Plan addresses ways that can effect change in our communities. The following considerations should be taken into account when striving for environmental literacy in the workplace:
- Best practices within a business or industry should be recognized, shared, and replicated.
- Relationships between businesses and their local communities should be created and/or strengthened.

Goal 1: Adopt and implement sustainability as an organizational value.
- Designate, train and equip key personnel to guide internal and external practices that promote natural resource conservation, preservation, or environmentally responsible actions.
- Review internal organizational procedures or models that facilitate environmentally friendly or sustainable behaviors and implement industry-specific best practices.
- Recognize and celebrate efforts and achievements that support the development of environmental literacy within the organization.
- Collaborate with other organizations and agencies to increase sustainable development or environmentally responsible behavior throughout the community or state. (See business resources—SBA and Enviroliteracy Greening Business Guides—for specific examples.)

Goal 2: Become a resource for schools and youth development organizations.
- Identify key staff and provide tools for them to interact with schools and non-formal education (e.g., part of process in NWF Eco-schools USA)
- Provide opportunities for hands-on, real-world experiences for students and youth to connect with their local natural resources.
- Provide technical support to education organizations (school districts, museums, centers, etc.) to leverage and utilize the organization’s assets, expertise, infrastructure and systems.
• Provide financial support to educational and youth organizations that strive to provide opportunities for increasing environmental literacy.

Tourism Industry
Tourism is Florida’s number 1 industry; in 2015 it employed 1.2 million Floridians and welcomed 105 million visitors who spent 89 million dollars. People visit Florida for a wide range of reasons, including sunshine and warmth. Activities as diverse as golf, paddle boarding, beaches, boating, fishing, kayaking, wildlife viewing, camping, hiking, biking, golf, theme parks, cruises, fishing, etc.

Florida’s coastal areas are rich in biodiversity and include fragile ecosystems, but are the most popular places to visit, so environmental literacy can play an important role in alleviating some of the negative impacts that millions of visitors may have.

Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the wellbeing of local people is an important aspect of living in the Sunshine State. To minimize impact on our natural resources (e.g., soil erosion, increased pollution, discharges into water bodies, natural habitat loss, and increased pressure on endangered species), we must convey a message of environmental and cultural awareness and respect.

Boosting environmental literacy amongst tourism operators and their customers can also improve the connections visitors make to Florida’s natural resources and ecosystems, while helping to conserve those aspects of Florida that many tourists want to experience when they visit. Here are some things that the tourism industry should consider.

Goal 1: Show visitors that you care about the environment.
• Include signage that describes how your business supports and protects local communities and ecosystems, and complies with laws regarding the protection of natural resources.
• Seek and display certifications that show your commitment, so visitors can appreciate and patronize your business.
• Be aware of local environmental issues and incorporate them into your business plan.

Goal 2: Provide environmental education to help staff and visitors see connections between your business, your community, and local species and ecosystems.
  • Educate and train yourself and your staff about local environments, species, and issues.
  • Connect with local environmental education providers to help your customers learn and appreciate what you have to offer.
  • Utilize knowledgeable local volunteers.
Appendix A: References and Resources

Learning resources
605 FW 6 Environmental Education, NAAEE Nonformal Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence
https://naaee.org/our-work/programs/guidelines-excellence

Call to Action to reconnect the world’s children with nature:
https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/nature/Call_to_Action.pdf

Business resources – FELP (temporary reference location for relevancy)
http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/sustainability-business-sense-profit-purpose

Tourism Resources
Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism (FloridaSEE): http://www.floridasee.org/

Ecotourism in Florida: Letting Nature Work for You
http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/fr/fr17800.pdf

Visit Florida: www.visitflorida.com/

General Resources

About EE and Why It Matters: NAAEE
https://naaee.org/search/site/Environmental%2520literacy%2520for%2520students
Appendix B: Major EE Milestones Florida’s History

1949: Governor’s Resource Use Education Committee.

1970: EE Act in adopted by FL; Positions within DOE w/ budget to develop a state EE program and EE Advisory Council; Completion of Florida Master Plan and Action Guide for State EE.

1973: Bureau of EE within DOE, 8 staff positions, mini-grant program.

1981: League of Environmental Educators in Florida created.

1983: All funding for EE in DOE cut due to lack of complete grant records and support.


1987: Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC) established and Comprehensive Plan for EE completed.

1989: Amendment Comprehensive EE Act of 1986; Save Our State EE Trust established as dedicated EE funding source, Florida Advisory Council on EE (FACEE), Interagency Coordinating Committee for EE (ICCEE), Dept. of Ed- Office of EE (OEE), EE program in Executive Office of Governor, and EE Foundation of FL manage EE in Florida. Regional Service Projects (RSPs) established.

1991: Budget shortfalls statewide; large portion of funding loss for EE.

1992: ICCEE and EE program in the Governor’s Office are repealed; SCENE, informal State Committee on EE, begins.

1993: Florida Department of Environmental Protection Office of EE established.


2000: Funding for RSPs dissolved.

2001: Office of EE at DOE closed. Grant funding enabled DOE to have an EE Specialist on staff.

2004: ACEE ended.

2008: SCENE published the State of Florida Environmental Primer.


2010: Funding for EE Specialist in DOE ended.
Appendix C: History of Environmental Education in Florida

Since the 1970s, the state of Florida has had advances and set-backs in providing support for environmental education at the state level. Seeing the need to protect Florida’s natural resources, policy makers adopted the Environmental Education Act of 1970. This legislation included (1) consultant and staff positions within the Department of Education’s (DOE) Bureau of Curriculum; (2) a budget of for the development of a state EE program; and (3) an EE Advisory Council (Hammond, 1994).

The Advisory Council included state legislators, government department staff, educators, business industry leaders, and representatives from environmental and civic organizations. This group oversaw completion of the Florida Master Plan and Action Guide for State Environmental Education. When mandated funds were not being used to fund EE programs, the council successfully lobbied for an amendment to the 1970 EE Act for a separate Bureau of Environmental Education within the DOE. This was passed in 1973. In the remaining 70’s, DOE staff organized state, regional, and local conferences and conducted teacher training workshops throughout Florida on ways to integrate EE into all grade levels and disciplines.

The early 1980’s brought to light possible misspending of mini grant funds due to poor record keeping and involvement of the EE Coordinator in partisan politics possibly alienated a variety of supports resulting in little support for renewed legislative acts for EE. (Hammond, 1994) This resulted in loss for funding EE programs.

EE supporters rallied together to support passage of the 1986 EE Act. This legislation required a Comprehensive Plan for Environmental Education (CPEE) and a Council on Comprehensive Environmental Education with members representing a large number of governmental, civic, environmental, and business agencies and organizations. The Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC) was created to bring representatives from different governmental agencies together to coordinate efforts for supporting EE and implementing sections of the CPEE. The council created a unique structure for implementing the CPEE. In addition to ICC, Office of the Governor, Office of EE in DOE, and Community EE Coordinating Committee each had different roles for implementation. This structure was an exciting innovation among state-level EE initiatives because it linked all relevant government officials and departments and involved the business and the private/non-profit sectors. (Hammonds, 1994)

The Master Plan and Action Guide for State Environmental Education resulted in an EE resource clearinghouse of EE information and materials, a Florida Directory for EE Programs, solid waste and recycling awareness specialist positions, a State Agency Resources Directory and Speakers Guide, teacher summer institutes, and a database of available nonformal EE programs.
The 1989 Amendment to the Comprehensive Environmental Education Act as sponsored by Senator Tom McPherson (Chair of the Natural Resources Committee and a member of the Appropriations Committee) and Representative Everett Kelly established a dedicated funding source for EE programs named the Save Our State EE Trust fund (SOS EE Fund) (Hammond, 1994).

The Florida Advisory Council on Environmental Education (FACEE) coordinated the state's EE program by administering a grants program and recommended policies and practices needed to provide quality EE in the state to the legislature. FACEE emphasized EE for the general Florida citizenry and not only school children. FACEE's membership includes lawmakers, public officials, agency representatives and community, environmental and industry leaders.

The Office of Environmental Education (OEE) in the Department of Education had five full-time staff and conducted curriculum development, teacher education, and the distribution and production of EE materials. This office maintained a computerized clearinghouse of EE materials, established five Regional Service Projects (RSPs) to help deliver EE throughout the state's K-12 schools, community colleges, and state universities.

The Interagency Coordinating Committee for Environmental Education (ICCEE) was composed of representatives of sixteen governmental. This committee was established to reduce overlap in agency programs and to work collectively on special events and projects such as promoting Earth Day and a state provided tree planting campaign.

Executive Office of the Governor (EOG) administered the governor's EE grants program aimed at visitors and residents not served by the public education system. EE publications that the EOG produced included a monthly EE bulletin and the Florida Directory of Environmental Agencies and Organizations.

The Environmental Education Foundation of Florida was established as a non-profit, private corporation to further EE in Florida. The primary goals of the foundation were to raise funds from the private sector for EE programs, and to help foster a better understanding of the relationship between Florida's environment and economy. (Hammond, 1994)

A recession hit all states in 1991. Funding for EE programs was cut to cover general costs of needed public services. Senator George Kirkpatrick introduced Senate Bill 1850 to streamline EE programs and committee’s to improve the output of EE. The ICEE and EOG were repealed due to duplication of efforts by FACEE. SCENE, State Committee on EE, was established as an informal group to replace ICCEE. At this time, DOE’s Florida’s Fragile Environment five-year program began. This program aimed to improve middle school math, science and technology instruction through teacher professional development events and curriculum development.

Through the 1990’s EE was in a good position in the state of Florida. In 2000 support and funding for EE began to diminish. First loss of funding for RSPs followed by the Office of EE at
DOE in 2001 and later ACEE (originally named FACEE) dissolved in 2004. The members of SCENE published the *State of Florida Environmental Education Primer* in 2008. A copy was given to all legislators and a box delivered to the Governor's Office. The purpose of the primer is to establish a common understanding about various scientific or environmental topics/terms that are either a priority for Florida's environmental administrators or are commonly used in environmental education literature, wildlife publications or reports.

The introduction of the No Child Left Inside Act of 2009 brought a renewed focus to Florida as a way to reinvigorate support for EE at the state level.